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Title: Need to ensure the release of Indian fishermen under custody of Sri Lanka.

SHRI N.S.V. CHITTHAN (DINDIGUL): Sir, life of fishermen is always full of misery and sorrow. If a fisherman goes into the sea for fishing, there is no certainty that he will come back alive. Furthermore, fishing is seasonal. Fishes, prawns and other sea products earn a foreign exchange of Rs. 650 crore per year.

Sir, I am pained to state that on 8th December, 2004, 13 fishermen fishermen from Jegathapattinam of Pudukottai district who went into the sea for fishing were arrested by the Sri Lankan Navy and they also captured three of their mechanised boats. We do not know what has happened to them. Sir, this is not the first time that the Sri Lankan Navy is doing this. Very recently, they captured 101 fishing boats owned by our fishermen.

Earlier, on 26.7.2004, a fishing boat from Chennai bearing No. MDS 967 which is said to have lost its way in the sea was captured by the Bangladesh Government and six people who were in the boat are still in their custody. This issue has been raised on many occasions. If the Government of India does not take a serious and constructive view, I fear that fishing will be hit badly in South India, particularly in Tamil Nadu.

Sir, through you, I would urge upon the Government of India and the hon. Prime Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh, to take necessary steps on this issue and I request him to intervene most urgently and get the arrested fishermen released and also restore the fishing boats to them.

MR. SPEAKER: Shri Shishupal Patle − not present.